

Asheville City Council
Planning and Economic Development Committee

3:30 p.m., May 15, 2012
City Hall, First Floor Conference Room

Minutes

Present: Vice Mayor Esther Manheimer, Chair; Councilmember Cecil Bothwell;
Councilmember Marc Hunt

Staff: Gary Jackson, Judy Daniel, Ken Putnam, Steve Shoaf, Barb Mee

The Planning and Economic Development Committee met on May 15, 2012, in the First Floor Conference Room, City Hall. Vice Mayor Manheimer called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

1. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes from the March 20, 2012, meeting were approved as amended.

2. Updates

Updating the Watershed Management and Conservation Easement

Steve Shoaf, Water Resources Director, gave the update. He reported that the MSD/Water System Legislative Research Commission provided a recommendation about the Conservation Trust for North Carolina and the City of Asheville's role of protecting the drinking water source. The Asheville Watershed Conservation Easement was signed in 1996 and the report recommended that the parties revisit and possibly clarify the agreement. Mr. Shoaf stated that the City's role for the past 100+ years has been to provide safe, high quality drinking water to the customers of the water system. The City of Asheville continues to own the North Fork and Bee Tree watershed area. In recognition of this the following process is suggested to address the report recommendation: that the City Attorney and Water Resources staff will collaborate to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP). This will identify a scope of work, description of necessary experience, expected timeframe and terms and conditions. It will be within the framework of management of a drinking water supply watershed and the requirements to accomplish protection of water quality and the environment. As these watershed questions have been visited before (most recently in 2004), staff will consult with the Conservation Trust for North Carolina and other expert sources when developing the scope of work.

The purpose of the RFP will be to identify an appropriate entity to evaluate the current documents and practices compared to current best practices. The expected deliverable from the selected entity will be to provide the City with a summary of the current practices and legal obligations, a comparison to best practices, and any recommendations or considerations for changing our documentation or practices. Staff anticipates that developing the RFP, advertising and award will require approximately

three months. Following the award, evaluation and comparison to best practices is estimated at four months. Following receipt of final report, the City Attorney and Water Resources staff will present to full Council any recommendations resulting from the study.

Councilman Hunt expressed his desire that the process move forward quickly and efficiently. He also expressed his concern with an RFP process, and suggested instead engaging an attorney with familiarity with conservation easements. Mr. Shoaf replied that there were issues that may fall outside the legal framework, due to the involvement of water quality.

Councilman Bothwell voiced his concern regarding the timeframe of the project; Mr. Shoaf indicated it was simply an estimate.

Vice Mayor Manheimer suggested separating the watershed management and the conservation easement – due to a sense of urgency to tighten up the conservation easement, and to shorten the timeframe in the RFP, so as to have it in place before the first day of long session in Raleigh.

Mr. Jackson suggested working with the City Attorney to produce an RFQ versus an RFP, to try to move process along in order to complete it within calendar year. This would enable Council to act before holiday season. The Committee agreed with his recommendation.

3. New Business

Complete Streets Policy Review

Ken Putnam, Transportation, reviewed for the Committee the Complete Streets Policy Staff Report, dated May 15, 2012 (see attached). He commented that a Complete Streets is included in the City Council's current Strategic Operating Plan, and that the City's proposed policy is based on best practices identified by the National Center for Complete Streets. The proposed policy was drafted by a multi-disciplinary work group. It is definitely a first step to set the vision by reviewing and modifying existing standards, specifications and other City guidelines. The policy, if adopted, would apply to new and existing city-maintained streets.

The proposed policy has been endorsed by both the Transit and Greenway Commissions, and by the Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force, and will have minimal fiscal impact. Mr. Putnam stated that this item is confirmed to go before full Council on June 26.

4. Unfinished Business

Mr. Jackson reported on the status of the following economic development projects:

- June 5th: celebration of completion of complete streets rebuild on Clingman Avenue.

- Waller Tract/Hominy Creek: Nikki Reid, Real Estate Manager, is in contact with the private property owners as they have some receptivity in pursuing an easement.
- Staff is moving forward on working with UNCA on the 525 Broadway site, and the details of how the greenway will tie into the intersection and existing greenways.
- Pearson Bridge property: staff working with RiverLink to give access to the river to the folks who are renovating the maintenance tire shop, as the City owns the land behind the shop, between shop and river.
- Clingman Forest greenway: Ms. Reid is also working on what the alignment would be and potential trades of land to move ahead with that connection
- Craven Street rebuild for New Belgium: an engineer has been selected and staff has successfully negotiated with them; this should come before Council on June 12th.
- New Belgium economic development incentives: will come before Council in June.
- Haywood Street property: Based on the this Committee's recommendation, Mr. Oast is building into the real estate agreement a role for the Asheville Design Center in the design process.

5. Presentations and Public Comment

Public Comment:

Claudia Nix spoke in support of the Complete Streets Policy, as she has been an advocate for such a policy for many years.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30p.